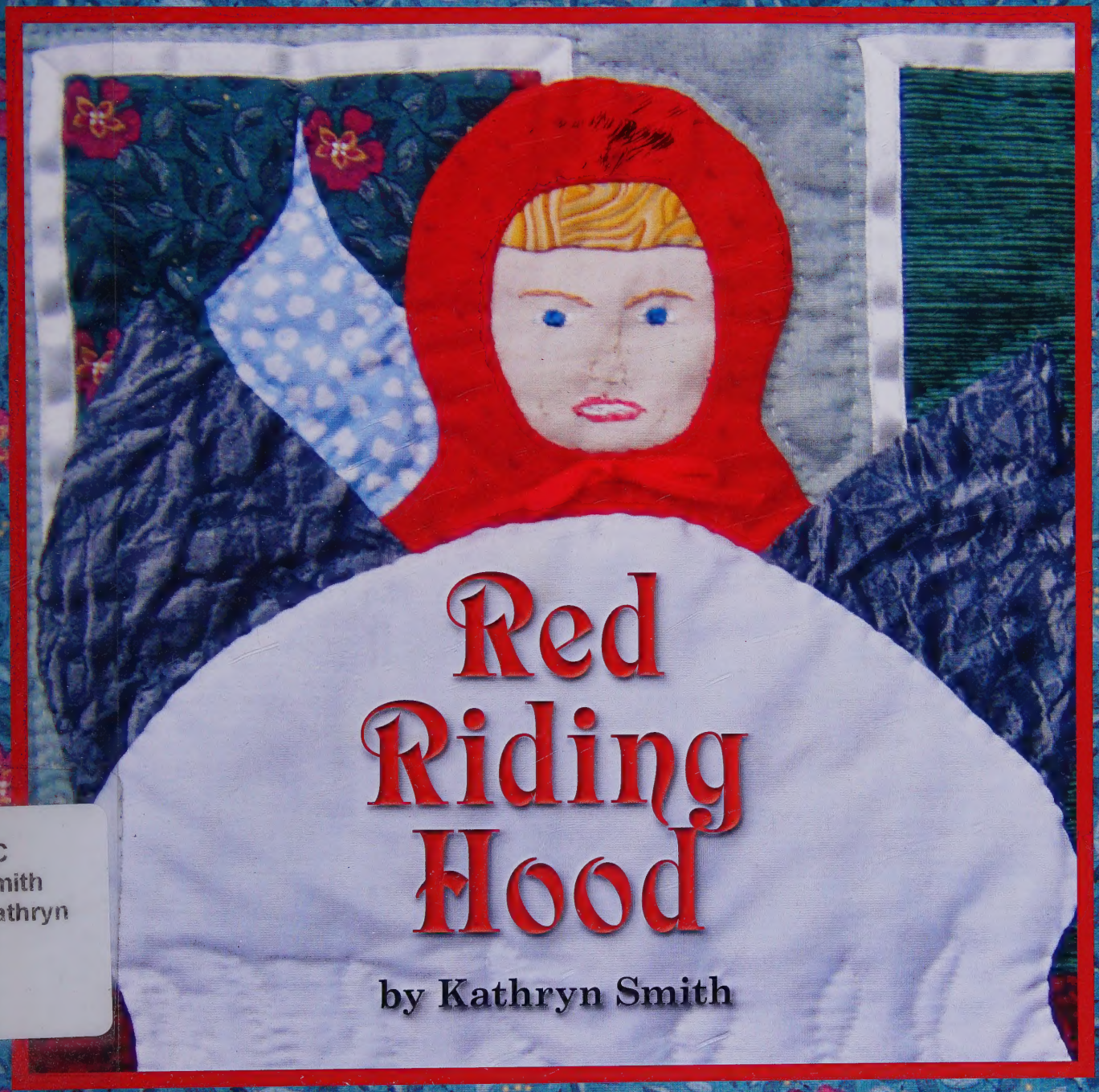

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Red Riding Hood

A Tale in Quilts

Retold and illustrated
by Kathryn Smith

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Kathryn Smith LLC
400 Heyward Road
Anderson, SC 29621
Kathrynsmith16@yahoo.com

Book design by Theresa O'Rourke
Printed and bound in Anderson, SC by PIP Printing & Marketing

To Liddy, who inspired my quilt

"Little Red Riding-Hood was my first love.
I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding-Hood,
I should have known perfect bliss."

– *Charles Dickens*

There once was a little girl named Elizabeth who was as sweet as she was pretty. She had big blue eyes that turned down at the corners, and blonde hair that curled across her forehead, and dimples that showed in her cheeks when she smiled even a little bit.

Elizabeth's mother loved her very much.

Mother was clever with a needle and thread, and was known far and wide for her beautiful quilts. At night, after Elizabeth had gone to bed, her mother made wonderful clothes for her to wear. She sewed ruffled nightgowns fit for a princess and a soft blue dress just the color of Elizabeth's eyes and patchwork vests embroidered with sad-eyed kittens.

But the most special garment of all was a red velvet cape with a hood that she made for Elizabeth's birthday.

Elizabeth wore it so often people called her Red Riding Hood.

One day, Elizabeth's mother put a big willow basket on the kitchen table. She placed in the basket a jar of cherry jam, a shiny red apple and a loaf of warm, fresh bread.

Packing a basket for Elizabeth's grandmother was something she had done many times before, and usually she and Elizabeth walked together through the woods to deliver it. They would often stay for a tea party, for Elizabeth loved her grandmother very much and her grandmother loved Elizabeth, too.

"Your grandmother is not feeling well," Mother told Red Riding Hood. "I have to finish a quilt today, and don't have time to go for a visit. You've never walked all the way to her cottage by yourself, but you are old enough now. Just stay on the path, don't talk to anyone you don't know, and don't stop on the way."

WIECK'S
Naturally
Sweet

Elizabeth was very happy, because she had often begged to be allowed to walk through the woods alone. She promised she would do just as her mother said. She put on her red cape and hood, picked up the basket, and kissed her mother good-bye.

As her mother kissed her good-bye, she said, "Remember what I said, my Little Red Riding Hood."

Then she watched Elizabeth cross the meadow dotted with spring flowers and fluttering butterflies and enter the dark woods.

Mother stood at the door a long time after that, wondering if she had done the right thing. After awhile, she returned to her quilt and picked up her silver needle.

It was just a short walk, she thought. Surely Elizabeth would be safe.

Elizabeth had not gone very far into the woods when she met a wolf. She had never seen a wolf before; she thought this one was a big shaggy dog, and she was not afraid.

"Hello, little girl," said the wolf. "What brings you out on this fine spring day?"

Elizabeth didn't think twice about replying. Her mother had told her not to talk to strangers, but what was the harm in talking to a big dog?

"I'm taking this basket of food to my grandmother," Elizabeth said. "She is sick in bed."

"Does she live a long way from here?" asked the wolf, stepping closer.

"She lives in the blue cottage at the edge of the woods," said Elizabeth, adding proudly, "This is the first time my mother has let me walk there all by myself!"

"Good for you!" said the wolf. "You've chosen a fine day for your walk. Say, why don't you pick a few flowers for your grandmother along the way?"

"What a good idea!" Red Riding Hood said, forgetting her mother's warning not to stop along the way. After bidding the wolf good-bye, she filled the willow basket with colorful wildflowers. Then she sat down to rest for a few minutes by a brook, as the basket seemed to grow heavier with each step, and even took off her shoes and splashed her feet in the cold water.

The wolf, meanwhile, dashed through the trees and soon came to Grandmother's cottage. He stood on his hind legs and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" came a sweet voice from within.

"It's me, your granddaughter," said the wolf, using Elizabeth's voice.

"Little Red Riding Hood!" Grandmother said with delight. "Lift the latch and come inside!"

Imagine poor Grandmother's surprise when a big gray wolf bounded into her bedroom and leapt onto her bed! She screamed, and tried to push the wolf away with her poor old hands, then she fainted dead away.

The wolf rolled her under the bed without hurting her, for he had a more tender meal in mind. Then he found an extra nightgown and cap in Grandmother's chest of drawers, struggled into them and climbed back in the bed, pulling the quilt up to his eyes.

The bed springs had just stopped squeaking when there came a knock at the door. The wolf called out in a voice that sounded like Grandmother's, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Elizabeth," said Red Riding Hood.

"Lift the latch and come in, darling," said the wolf.

Red Riding Hood walked into the cottage, set her basket on the kitchen table and approached her grandmother's bed. She knew something wasn't right, but she couldn't decide what it was.

"Grandmother," she said, staring at the wolf. "What big ears you have!" For the wolf's ears poked out from under the night cap.

"The better to hear your sweet voice, my dear," said the wolf.

"But, Grandmother," Elizabeth said. "What a big nose you have!"

"The better to smell your basket of goodies," said the wolf. "I'm so hungry!"

"But, Grandmother," Elizabeth continued. "What big eyes you have!"

"The better to see you with, my dear," said the wolf, and with that the quilt slipped down under his chin.

"But, Grandmother," said Elizabeth, truly frightened now, "What big teeth you have!"

"The better to eat you with, my dear!" growled the wolf, and he leapt from the bed.

Elizabeth screamed and dashed from the room. The wolf was slowed for a moment by the grandmother's long gown, which got tangled around his feet, and Elizabeth found a chair to hide behind in the parlor.

Her safety was short lived. Too late, she realized the tail of her red cape was in plain sight. She heard a deep growl close by and she covered her eyes with her hands, as if she could make herself disappear.

But the growl was followed by a bump, then a howl and a thump, and when Elizabeth dared to uncover her eyes, she saw a most wonderful sight.

There stood her mother, with the wolf lying at her feet. Mother's sharpest sewing scissors were sticking out of his throat. "Elizabeth!" her mother cried, and Red Riding Hood ran into her arms.

"Oh, Mama, oh, Mama! I was so frightened!" she cried.

Her mother held Elizabeth tight and wiped away her tears. Then they thought about Grandmother. "Grandmother!" they called. "Are you here?"

A weak voice led Elizabeth and her mother into the bedroom, where they found Grandmother under the bed. They helped her out, and after she felt better, the three of them sat down to a tea party in the kitchen, eating the bread and jam and the shiny red apple.

Red Riding Hood held her mother's hand all the way home, and it was a long time before she asked to go walking in the forest alone.

Redwork quilt Designs for redwork penny squares were sold for a penny each in the early 1900s at dry goods stores. This quilt was embroidered around 1912 (see the date on the horse shoe in the fifth row) and completed by the author in 2008. How many squares can you find in the pages of the book? The quilt now belongs to Mrs. Virginia Banker.

Red Riding Hood quilt The Red Riding Hood quilt was inspired by a photograph of the author's daughter, Elizabeth Anne Smith, taken when she was four years old and wearing a red hoodie. The quilt took a year to make and was completed in 1995. It belongs to the author.

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Red Riding Hood : a tale in
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Kathryn Smith's love of quilts, books, cats and the adventures of Red Riding Hood are well-known in Anderson, South Carolina, where she has lived since 1986. A full-time writer and editor, Kathryn is the author *A Necessary War: Anderson County Residents Remember World War II* and co-author with Johnny Mann of *The Music Mann: My Life in Song*. She and her husband Leo have a son, Adam, who first gave her a reason to make quilts; and a daughter, Elizabeth, who inspired the Red Riding Hood quilt. Their granddaughter London will soon be old enough to hear about Red Riding Hood from her Grand Kat. The Smiths share their home with three guard cats, a dog that barks but does not bite and a personal library that includes more than seventy versions of "Little Red Riding Hood."

Photo by John Fowler

$9.95
ISBN 978-1-4951-0247-9
50995>

P8-AAR-719